

IMPACT STORY

Supporting New Mexico Local Education Agencies in Strategically Using American Rescue Plan Funds

A Partnership of the New Mexico
Public Education Department and
Region 13 Comprehensive Center

Project Overview

Evidence-based practices, funding tools, and professional support help local education agencies meet the American Rescue Plan moment

The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) was faced with ensuring its local education agencies (LEAs)—comprising 89 school districts and 100 charter schools—had sufficient support to effectively use American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to meet students' most pressing needs. NMPED turned to the Region 13 Comprehensive Center (R13CC) in 2021 to help with this critical effort.



The unprecedented infusion of federal relief and recovery funds to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system brought with it both an opportunity and an urgent need for New Mexico to design and implement new measures to help school districts strategically plan, implement, track, and evaluate the use of those funds.

The result: With the help of the R13CC, the NMPED has delivered ongoing learning opportunities and support to LEA leaders, including the following:

- Sharing evidence-based practices to meet the needs of traditionally disadvantaged students
- Providing results-driven tools, coaching, and technical assistance to evaluate funding efficacy and to align, allocate, track, and sustain ARP funds
- Offering expert and peer guidance to sustain progress related to the use of ARP funds

- » **100%** of NM's technical assistance coaches reported increased capacity to support LEAs
- » **90%** of LEA participants Agreed or Strongly Agreed the sessions were *high-quality, relevant, and useful*
- » **70%** of NM's 89 LEAs and **40%** of its charter schools participated in the 2021–22 webinar series
- » **20%** of LEAs participated in the three communities of practice cohorts

Project Description

A multi-phase approach provided support based on LEAs' needs

The R13CC designed and delivered support, divided into three distinct phases, to help New Mexico's LEA leaders effectively use ARP funds. All phases included virtual training, ongoing technical assistance, and the dissemination of resources and tools. Each phase was modified over time to meet evolving LEA needs as they occurred, informed by both LEA input and outcomes from previous phases.

Throughout the three phases, the R13CC supported NMPED's Technical Assistance Team, which was made up of a cadre of retired district administrators. This team, in turn, facilitated sessions and provided follow-up coaching and support to LEAs in their assigned regions between sessions.

Phase I: Webinar Series Supports LEAs in Strategically Using ARP Funds (2021–22)

The R13CC partnered with NMPED to co-plan and implement a series of webinars open to all LEAs as they prepared their American Rescue Plan (ARP) applications focused on the strategic use of those funds and the selection and use of evidence-based practices targeted for students most in need. Held from October 2021 to February 2022, the webinars focused on a range of topics, including

- Selecting Evidence-Based Practices and Using Student-Centered Budgeting Practices to Support School-Based Health
- Accelerating Learning
- Equitable Learning Outcomes
- Educator Shortages
- Sustainability

LEA breakout sessions provided opportunities for participants to dialogue and share experiences.

Phase II: Communities of Practice Support LEAs in Implementing ARP Plans (2022)

At the conclusion of the webinar series, several LEAs were ready to go deeper and build upon what was introduced in the webinars. Accordingly, the R13CC partnered with NMPED to co-plan and implement several communities of practice (CoP) to enable LEA teams to engage in deeper learning through structured team planning time over several weeks. Session topics included

- Leveraging and aligning existing planning processes and resources with Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds
- Effectively allocating resources for students most in need
- Tracking intended versus actual investments and results
- Sustaining results-driven strategies

LEA working sessions provided LEA teams with time to plan and apply the learning and tools they received through the CoP.

Phase III: Supporting LEAs in Planning for the Remaining Use of Funds and Sustainability (2023)

In preparation for the anticipated end of ESSER funding in September 2024, the R13CC partnered with NMPED to offer a virtual session open to all LEAs. This session shifted focus to the strategic planning and use of remaining funds and sustainability planning, shared the key concepts and tools from the communities of practice to this broader audience, and provided an opportunity to provide more targeted support to those LEAs who needed it based on an analysis of LEA ARP expenditures and balances. A key feature of this session was hearing from LEAs that had participated in the CoP regarding how they used the tools that they received through the CoP for strategic planning and tracking of ARP investments and results. This type of sharing allowed LEAs to share their experiences more broadly with their peers.

Project Outcomes

NMPED was able to provide ongoing needs-based support to strategically plan, implement, track, and evaluate the use of ARP funds targeted for students most in need

- Through its partnership with the R13CC, NMPED increased its capacity to provide support to LEAs.
- The NM Technical Assistance Team increased its capacity to support LEAs in the selection and use of evidence-based practices and fiscal planning related to ARP funds.
- The LEAs increased their capacity to strategically plan and use ESSER funds in coordination with other federal and state resources.

“R13CC did an excellent job of preparing us to work with the LEAs. I haven’t had that before in 31 years. The training gives facilitators an opportunity to have a voice and gives LEAs confidence in the coaches they have.”

—NM Technical Assistance Team member

Figure 1: Capacity-Building Results



New Mexico LEAs Received Critical Support to Navigate the Use of ARP Funds

LEA participants who took part in the three phases of support around the strategic use of ARP funds represented every region of the state, both urban and rural. LEAs reported that the tools, connections, and guidance they received made it possible for them to not just direct millions in aid more strategically toward high needs, but to **apply the same strategic lens toward future resource planning.**

“The information provided will support LEAs in identifying evidence-based practices (EBPs), significantly increasing the likelihood funds are used in a manner that supports increased outcomes.”

—Webinar participant

“The community of practice gave us the opportunity to work together, and communicate with and learn from each other. It was an opportunity for us to change and do better.”

—CoP participant

“This [tool] is how I am keeping track of progress on expenditures and I’m constantly using it with my leadership team” (regarding the use of a tool received through the CoP).

—CoP participant

For more information about the Region 13 Comprehensive Center, visit the [Center's webpage](#).